

Giants, Dwarfs, and Skeletons on Display: Created Identity and the Commodified Abnormal
Body in Georgian and Victorian Britain

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On March 25, 1790, Sir Everard Home wrote to his friend and brother-in-law, the eminent Georgian surgeon John Hunter, with news of a most exciting arrival from India. “Dear Sir,” Home began, “I feel a particular satisfaction in...[adding] to your invaluable collection the very uncommon double skull of a monstrous child, born in the East Indies, which attracted the attention of all the curious in Calcutta, where it was shown alive.”¹ The small boy had been born in Bengal in 1783 with a second skull fused to the top of his head. The second head ended in a tumor, and so terrified the midwife assisting the birth that she attempted to destroy the child in a fire. He was pulled from the coals alive, but with several disfiguring burns to his faces and ear. His parents were extremely poor and exhibited their son for money on the streets of Calcutta until his death in 1785 from a cobra bite. At the time the family was living on the estate of Mr. Dent, the East India Company’s agent for salt at Tumloch. Shortly following the boy’s burial the remains were exhumed and dissected by Mr. Dent, who carried them back to England and sold them to Sir Everard Home.² Home donated the skull to Hunter, who was famed for his collection of anatomical and pathological preparations containing the remains of remarkable abnormal bodies.

The fused heads remained on display at the Hunterian museum into the twentieth century. They, unlike many of Hunter’s specimens, survived the blitz and are now considered to be one of Hunter’s most remarkable acquisitions. Yet the heads are famous as much for their fantastical history as for their shocking appearance. Hunter, like some other medical men, was drawn to the physical remains of the abnormal and monstrous partly because of the stories that they told. These stories were recorded as identities and complied from the details of the bodies’ time on display; while living and after death. The carefully created micro-history of each

deformed specimen on exhibit imbued the object with a value reserved for the most remarkable and prized specimens on the market.

The origin tale of this specimen, like most claims about monstrous bodies in the Georgian and Victorian periods, was fantastical to the point of sensationalism. It incorporated elements of cultural violence, exoticism, rarity and wonder, and was (in all likelihood) mostly fabricated. But the authenticity of such narratives was, and remains to be, of little importance.

Many scholars have noted that the late Georgian and Victorian fascination with the abnormal body was dually manifested in anatomy exhibitions and freak shows, but until now there exists no close study comparing the two ways of viewing and reading physical abnormality.

What is especially interesting, and untouched by existing scholarship, is how and why the personal history and textual identities of abnormal bodies were constructed the way they were.

From the late 1970s to the 1990s the study of the (living) displayed abnormal body experienced a revival. Anthropologists and sociologists regarded such bodies (freaks) as an exploited group of disabled persons, stripped of their agency. Historians who studied the living abnormal body approached freaks in the Georgian and Victorian eras as a way of discussing gender, race, and imperialism. Certainly, little scholarship covers the fascinating practice of Victorian anatomical collection, let alone compares the created histories of collected anomalous remains to that of living freak performers.

Through close reading and analysis of documents that establish the textual identity of Charles Byrne (a giant who died in the Georgian era, but was most famously exhibited and written about in the Victorian period) and Julia Pastrana, (“the Nondescript” exhibited in mid-Victorian Britain) four crucial aspects of textual identity construction become apparent. This paper will examine how textual identity was created and communicated through the texts that

described abnormal bodies on display in late Georgian and Victorian Britain and argue that anatomical oddities with textual identities were granted higher degrees of monetary, intellectual, and cultural value than displayed bodies with no apparent abnormality and identity.



Fig.1 The double skull John Hunter received from Sir Everard Home.

In order to discuss this subject with precision, some key terminology must be defined. These terms are not my own, they were taken either from the sources themselves or from modern scholarship on abnormal bodies. Though some terms may be offensive to 21st century sensibilities, they are used in order to reflect the ways that abnormal bodies were discussed popularly and medically in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Since the aim of this paper is to extrapolate the specific literary construction of monstrous identity from primary sources, it is essential that authentic, un-sanitized vocabulary be used throughout this discussion.

The specimens that this paper will examine were often parts of private or institutional collections of anatomy and pathology. “Anatomy” will refer to the study and preparation of healthy, normal human bodies. “Pathology” will refer to the study and preparation of unhealthy or abnormal, bodies. “Preparation” will be used to describe any remains preserved for display or exhibit. The living equivalent of a preparation will be referred to as a “freak,” or freak performer: one who displays one’s abnormal body for income, usually under the management of a showman. “Monster” will be used to describe both living and dead physical anomalies. “Worth” will be used to discuss the market value of a freak or preparation, while “value” will encompass the intellectual or cultural significance of a deformed body. These terms are essential to understanding the key assertions of this paper’s arguments, as well as how freaks and pathological preparations were enmeshed in the spectacular and educational exhibitory complex of Victorian Britain.

The early 19th-century middle and working classes primarily experienced science through displays of spectacle that transformed scientific knowledge into visual experiences. The most popular way for these Britons to engage with the scientific world was viewing exhibitions; these took the form of world fairs, public museums, menageries, commercial demonstrations, and freakshows.³ Standardization of the Saturday half-holiday created a high demand for cheap entertainment, and fueled the subsequent rise of music halls, seaside resorts, pleasure gardens, theaters, circuses, zoos, aquariums, and popular museums. By way of these new and popular venues, exhibitions of anomalous bodies reached their apogee in the nineteenth century.⁴ Medical collections in particular experienced a surge of popularity in “the era of the public museum, publishing vast catalogues for their de-limited audiences and enjoying new premises such as the Gordon Museum at Guy’s.”⁵ Because the viewing demographic was semi-to-fully

literate, but lacked the more complete scientific education provided by the private tutors and university educations of the wealthy, the importance of literature that placed an exhibited object or phenomena into broader context cannot be understated. This paper focuses primarily on that literature which provided an identity and history for the monstrous body on display.

Although the spectacle of living freakish bodies has a long and rich history that dates back at least to the fifteenth century (some scholars even go so far as to call monstrosity the first international entertainment industry⁶), until the nineteenth century such persons largely operated as individual itinerant performers. Organized freakshows, featuring multiple freak performers, came into their own around 1840.⁷ These freakshows “celebrat[ed] pathological [de]formation as the ultimate mark of personal distinction.”⁸ Though the showman operating a freakshow utilized many ways of advertising and legitimating the abnormal body on display, by generating interest within the scientific community about the abnormal body and its origin, the showman gained free publicity and notoriety. This attracted patrons from all levels of society, from semi-literate crowds to posh surgeons and physicians. By specifically advertising certain shows to a more affluent and educated viewing audience the showman could charge higher admission while keeping the classes separate, thus maximizing his profit.⁹

In turn, medical interest in living abnormal bodies elevated freakshows beyond the realm of common entertainment. By the beginning of Queen Victoria’s reign in 1837, “the spectacle of the freakish was becoming an institutional tool of the medical profession; deformities were not to be looked at, but to be examined, speculated on, catalogued and put under glass as object lessons in abnormal physiology.”¹⁰ The practice of preparing and preserving abnormal pathology, either for private collections or educational instruction, had been robust since the early eighteenth

century¹¹, although, medical interest in close examination, and even the acquisition of, living anomalies was a more recent development.

Until the 1830s, when institutions such as the Royal College of Surgeons in Edinburgh allowed limited public access to their museum collections¹², the general public could only satiate its desire for abnormal physiological specimens by paying a fee to view various commercial anatomy museums and exhibitions put on by showmen-physicians.¹³ Institutional collections, however, particularly the collection founded by John Hunter and purchased by the British government in 1799, offered the best opportunity to view preserved examples of physical deformity. “By mid-century, the Hunterian Museum was widely acknowledged to be the foremost exhibit of unusual pathology and was regularly open to doctors, and, on a restricted basis, to the public.”¹⁴ Hunter’s collection was especially renowned for containing the remains of several famous freak performers. The intersection of an anomalous body’s role as a living freak on display, and as a dead pathological specimen on exhibit, will be examined in greater detail throughout this paper, particularly by close analysis of the literature surrounding Charles Byrne (the Irish Giant) and Julia Pastrana (the Nondescript).

The Abnormal Body as a Commodity

The essential commonality between the living and dead abnormal body as discussed in this paper is the treatment of that body as a commodity. A commodity is not one kind of thing, but a phase in the life of that thing.¹⁵ Though freak performers were living individuals, for the purpose of this discussion their bodies, and the identity of those bodies as depicted through the literature surrounding them, reflect the commodified state of a freak on public display. Similarly, though the bodies destined to become anatomical and pathological specimens may not have been

commodities while alive, the process of dissection and display reduced the remains to a commodified specimen. The texts that this paper will examine reveal the history and identity of deformed bodies as commodities, not bodies as living, feeling, human beings. This focus reduces the value placed on the veracity of the texts (which were largely fabricated), and emphasizes the ways in which the worth of the commodified body was enhanced through specific elements of its created textual identity and history. This section of the discussion will examine the body, living and dead, as a commodity.

Though the exhibition of living monstrous bodies may have been justified as an educational and scientific pursuit, for the freakshow proprietor it was always first and foremost a for-profit venture.¹⁶ “The commodification of [the freaks’] unusual bodies was part and parcel of a pervasive, though not necessarily new, desire for the spectacular and the curious.”¹⁷ Freak acts communicated exactly what the presenter or showman dictated based on costuming, theatrical stunts or mime, renaming, and the background information on the act received by the audience. Robert Bogdan refers to this deliberate process as “enfreakment,” and argues that the above factors were the crucial elements determining an act’s financial success.¹⁸ The freak’s fabricated background, physical condition, and other personal details were carefully shaped into a public identity that would maximize general interest and generate the most profit. Their bodies were being sold; any other aspect of the freak viewing experience was a fiction carefully constructed to maximize profit.

In order to draw in requisite crowds it was essential for the showman to portray his freaks as respectable. Freak performers were itinerant commodities that existed outside the stabilizing Victorian institutions of family and parish,¹⁹ but by advertising personal histories as part of the exhibit the showman could partially reintegrate his freaks into acceptable society. Additionally,

freaks challenged Victorian notions of acceptable occupational commodification of the body. Throughout the nineteenth century, for certain levels of society, selling one's body for labor was considered exceedingly respectable. However, other types of occupations wherein one sold one's body on a short term basis, such as prostitution, acrobatics, dancing and various other exhibitory acts, constituted an affront to respectable behavior.²⁰ Freak shows often represented the route to respectability for deformed individuals because it allowed them to work for a steady wage as independent laborers²¹ who, unlike prostitutes or acrobats, publically affirmed their place within respectable society through textual identification. The ability to present commodified freaks to audiences "not simply as individuals with remarkable bodies but also as fellow citizens who shared a comforting set of values,"²² was as important to the showman for financial reasons as it was to the freak performer for personal ones.²³ The thorough commodification of the living freak performer is particularly evident in the case of General Tom Thumb.

The American dwarf Charles Sherwood Stratton, perhaps the most famous dwarf ever to perform in circuses and freakshows, began touring America with P.T. Barnum at the age of five. Originally billed as Cupid or Napoleon Bonaparte, Stratton, who reached an adult height of 3'4", performed for the majority of his career as the English General Tom Thumb. However, Barnum only advertised Thumb as English during his American tours in order to capitalize on the draw spectators felt for a "foreign import."²⁴ General Tom Thumb embarked on several lucrative European tours between 1845 and 1878. *The Strand* magazine reported that the profits from his two tours in 1845 and 1847 exceeded 150,000 pounds,²⁵ a fortune worth over 15 million dollars today.²⁶ Similarly, Thumb's 1863 wedding to Lavinia Warren, another dwarf in Barnum's employ, was an exhibition financed by Barnum who collected the admission fees of the "guests" in attendance. Over five thousand New Yorkers joined the diminutive couple for their

reception.²⁷ This type of exhibitory stunt typifies the ways in which showman capitalized on themes of family and personal identity to profit off the respectability of their freaks.

The General consistently attracted massive crowds and revenue throughout the almost forty years that Barnum employed him, qualifying him as one of Barnum's most lucrative living investments—a fact that was clear to many Britons. An 1846 article in *Punch* proposing that a protective tariff be placed on Thumb, the “raw article of American produce,” indicates the extent to which the British considered him a living commodity.²⁸ The case of General Tom Thumb illustrates that the abnormal body could be, and was, regarded by most Britons almost exclusively as a commodity when significant profits were generated by its exhibition.



Fig.2 Portrait of General Tom Thumb and his wife Lavinia Warren on their wedding day.

This remained true even after the death of a freak performer. Deceased freaks had the potential to generate financial revenue for their owner/proprietor either through the sale of their remains to museums and collectors or by post-mortem exhibition. Such was the case for Julia Pastrana (the Nondescript) and her child. Their remains were mummified by her husband/manager and exhibited in a glass case after she died from post-partum complications mid-tour.²⁹ Other performers even signed contracts for the release of their bodies to anatomists after their death in an effort to generate extra income.³⁰ These remains would become the focal points of private and institutional collections such as the Hunterian. In most cases, however, freak performers wished to separate themselves from their professional identity in death by escaping the anatomists who were particularly interested in the freak's deformed anatomy. Charles Byrne (the Irish Giant) reportedly went to great lengths to keep his corpse from becoming a pathological preparation. Despite Byrne's directive that his dead body should be buried at sea, John Hunter acquired his remains and placed them in his museum. Byrne's 8'4" skeleton was displayed in the museum alongside the skeleton of another freak performer, Caroline Crachami (the Sicilian Fairy), a 20" tall dwarf.³¹ Despite the efforts of the performers themselves to avoid such a fate³², these two pathological preparations are very likely the most infamous specimens in the Hunterian collection.

The commodification of dead bodies aided medical instruction in dissection in addition to supplying physiological rarities for public and private exhibitions. In 1540, Henry VIII granted the company of Barbers and Surgeons the right to dissect the remains of four felons per year³³; Charles II would later extend the allowance to six per year.³⁴ Ruth Richardson has noted that corpses began to acquire monetary value during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries as dissection became an accepted and essential aspect of medical education.³⁵

Dissected and displayed bodies had, since the mid-eighteenth century, carried the popular stigma of murderers and criminals as they were the only bodies legally available for dissection. In the late eighteenth century this served as a partial deterrent for potential viewers (who were not affiliated with the medical profession) of medical museums. However, for members of the medical community,

“the social disadvantages of dismemberment were far outweighed (for collectors at least) by the cultural authority of the fragments in other contexts. Morbid anatomy was only one of a raft of new analytical ways of knowing around 1800 that objectified nature by breaking it down into pieces.”³⁶

As demand for bodies quickly overwhelmed supply, medical instructors and students looked to body snatchers, also known as “resurrection men” or “resurrectionists,” to supply them with the requisite number of fresh corpses. Illicit trade remained robust into the early nineteenth century and, “by 1800, in medical circles, market terminology was being applied to human corpses apparently without embarrassment.”³⁷ Resurrectionists, when apprehended, were rarely charged with theft as dead bodies could not be considered the property of the living. Fresh bodies did not constitute property (though they were commodified once they became the subject of a financial transaction between a resurrection man and his customer,) although, the preparations made from the dissected corpses did. This allowed anatomical or pathological preparations to be assigned monetary worth and publicly, legitimately purchased. This worth was often based on the educational value and rarity of the preparation; the larger the collection, the greater the educational value. Preparations of morbid anatomy and monsters accounted for about 3,000 items in Hunter’s collection, making his one of the most extensive and valuable collections in Britain.³⁸

The creation of ante- and post-mortem identity/ history was carried out through several different types of text, each type affected the nature of the identifying history it housed. The next

section of this paper examines the types of literature through which the identity and history of abnormal bodies was communicated.

Types of Identifying Texts

Several types of stylized and embellished narratives turned unusual bodies into freaks “within the formalized spaces of shows, museums, fairs and circuses.”³⁹ The first type of text used to construct the identity of an exhibited abnormal body was the “true life” booklet or pamphlet. This type of text was reserved for living, performing freaks. The contents of a true life booklet rarely varied from a standard four-part formula: a short biography, ending with the exhibit’s recent history; a description of the body’s appearance, substantiated by statements from medical men; endorsements from the affluent or respectable; and a brief history of the specimen’s exotic land of origin. These texts were designed solely as marketing devices, and as such were filled with exaggeration, fabrication and out-and-out lies.⁴⁰ Though Julia Pastrana’s pamphlet was only 9 pages long, some true life booklets were much longer. The manager of Maximo and Bartola⁴¹ (“the last of the ancient Aztecs”) sold a 48-page-long true life booklet detailing their elaborately fabricated history at their exhibit.⁴² Occasionally the true life pamphlet would merge with photographs in the form of postcards that could be sold at an exhibit. These, however, were not as popular and were printed on flimsy material; few have survived.⁴³ True life pamphlets have the advantage of providing detailed narrative histories of living performers, and are useful for determining the prestigious names attached to the living subjects.

The second type of text through which the identity of a specimen was created or preserved is newspaper publication. Again, this manner of text applied mainly to living abnormal bodies on display. When interpreting handbills or advertisements published in newspapers it is

important to keep in mind that profit was a key motivator in the circulation of these types of texts,⁴⁴ and therefore the veracity of the information is just as questionable as in true life booklets or carnival ballyhoo. Handbills and newspaper promotions were circulated by advance men who would travel ahead of the act to generate publicity.⁴⁵ Such texts grant important insight into the aspects of a freak's identity that the manager thought most important, or capable of selling tickets.

The third type of document used to convey the textual identity of a deformed body is the medical report or post-mortem findings published in medical journals, newspapers or casebooks. These texts used patient history as a context for surgical procedures or the cause of death. Patients named in case studies, unlike anonymous subjects used for dissection, were described in terms which reflected their individual histories,⁴⁶ and provided the basis for textual identity construction. This contextual information fed the “fascination with the morbidity and mortality of others—and particularly of figures in public life—[that] was evident in the reports of post mortems carried in the press.”⁴⁷ The case of Hoo Loo perfectly illustrates the ways in which identity was created through the case history of deformed bodies on display, and how that intact textual identity positively shaped the intellectual and cultural value of the commodified body.

The case of “Poor Hoo Loo” was published on April 16, 1831, in *The Lancet*. The medical report described an operation to excise a 56-pound scrotal tumor performed by Sir Astley Cooper at Guy's Hospital. The patient, a 32-year-old Chinese laborer named Hoo Loo, had traveled from Canton to England for the 1 hour and 45 minute operation which ended in his death. From the time he entered the country, Hoo Loo attracted attention as a physical curiosity; the report states that “the case excited considerable interest, both in and out of the profession, from the first moment of his arrival he was visited in the hospital by a great number of persons of

all ranks.”⁴⁸ When time came for Hoo Loo’s surgery the crowds of medical students vying for admittance overwhelmed the original venue, so the procedure was moved to the largest operating theater in Guy’s Hospital. This theater held 680 and quickly filled to capacity.⁴⁹ The operation progressed from an educational demonstration to a spectacle of deformity, as the patient died on the operating table and audience members rushed forward to purchase his clothing and queue as souvenirs.⁵⁰

The medical report published in *The Lancet* in many ways resembles the narrative history and detail found in true life pamphlets. Hoo Loo’s exotic origins were emphasized in a section describing his journey to England; indeed, like other ethnic deformed bodies, Hoo Loo was just as remarkable for his race as he was for his deformity. An excerpt from the report describing Hoo Loo’s surgery (performed without anesthesia) devotes unexpected amounts of detail to his personality, utilizing various forms of hyperbole in the style of freakshow proprietors:

The fortitude with which this great operation was approached, and throughout undergone, by Hoo Loo, was if not unexampled, at all events never exceeded in the annals of surgery. A groan now and then escaped him, and now and then a slight exclamation, and we thought we could trace in his tones a plaintive acknowledgment of the hopelessness of his case. Expressions of regret, too, that he had not rather borne with his affliction than suffered the operation, seemed softly but rapidly to vibrate from his lips as he closed his eyes, firmly set his teeth, and resignedly strung every nerve in obedience to the determination with which he had first submitted to the knife.

His character was naturally exceedingly amiable. When occupied in thought, his features assumed an appearance of slight melancholy, but at other times a very cheerful and good-tempered expression of countenance prevailed. The appearance of the features after death was very characteristic of this.⁵¹

As Meagan Kennedy has observed, “the sentimental passages in the case history rhetorically invoke the personality and virtues of Hoo Loo, as if to call up his image up from the dead.”⁵² It was not unusual for published post mortems or medical reports to devote some space for a brief patient history, but that information was limited for the most part to name, age, preexisting

medical conditions or procedures, pain history, and if applicable, occupation. That Hoo Loo's report included so much detail irrelevant to the medical proceedings of the case speaks to the role that textual identity played in increasing the value of specimens showcasing abnormal anatomy.

The last type of text used to build and communicate the manufactured identity of displayed pathological curiosities applies to specimens housed within institutional or private collections. The label and catalogue entry was perhaps the most enduring method of preserving and communicating a specimen's identity. By the 1840s, 50s, and 60s the lower middle class was widely recognized as an important emerging market for printed material. Readers and museum visitors of the 1840s and 50s were more dependent than any previous or future audience on the information and interpretation offered as part of the scientific reading or visiting experience.⁵³ By mid-century printed books and museum objects had come together to provide an enhanced visitor experience⁵⁴ wherein specimen labels referenced specific pages in the museum guidebook that would expand on the object's identity and history. "The experience of visitors was thus partly a learning experience, in which textually based information was brought to bear on the objects on display."⁵⁵ Museum displays were still designed for educated visitors from polite society; however, guidebooks and catalogues added a supplementary narrative of information and explanation for the benefit of other classes of visitor.⁵⁶

Chaplin, the former head curator and director of the Hunterian museum, has argued that there is evidence to suggest that details of a specimen case history were indeed displayed with anatomical preparations or otherwise available to the public. This information was often painted on jars which housed the preparations, scratched into lead tags, or printed on cards accompanying the specimen. Original labels were frequently removed in the nineteenth century for remounting. In the case of the Hunterian collection, however, William Clift⁵⁷ recovered them

and recorded the information into museum catalogues.⁵⁸ The Walton Hall natural history collection included a history of how each specimen was collected by Walton that was available to each visitor, therefore contributing a further layer of meaning to each displayed object.⁵⁹

Hunter's acquisition of Charles Byrne's skeleton ("the Irish Giant" also performed under the name O'Brien) typifies the degree of desirability and status (within major anatomical collections) awarded to specimens with well-established textual and cultural identity. The entry in the collection catalogue for Byrne's remains, specimen 223,⁶⁰ is indicative of the significance conferred by case history and identity within the nineteenth century medical world. Byrne's seven-page case history was compiled in the 1830s from the original catalogue entry, as well as biographical details, published accounts of his performing career, and accounts of his death. Whereas most catalogue entries with case histories focus primarily on diagnosis, surgical observations, and post-mortem findings, Byrne's entry places rare emphasis on the specimen's performing career and the race between anatomists to purchase his body, revealed through newspaper and magazine excerpts. This, in conjunction with the large sum that Hunter paid for Byrne's skeleton, exposes the essential role that the textually created identity of freak performers played in the enduring valuation of commodified bodies on display.

The Irish Giant and the Nondescript

The Irish Giant was born in 1761 in Ireland to an Irish father and Scots mother. He began to exhibit himself throughout England and Scotland in late adolescence, arriving in London on April 11, 1782, at the age of twenty one. His career there lasted only fourteen months, cut short by his untimely death in June of 1783. Byrne's height was frequently advertised as between 8'2"

and 8'4", though the skeleton in the Hunterian collection reveals him to have been closer to 7'7".⁶¹

Byrne was advertised in several publications as the tallest man in the world, a "prodigy,"⁶² the "greatest natural curiosity ever seen in this or any other kingdom," a giant "beyond what is set forth in ancient or modern history."⁶³ The texts that constituted his public identity through advertisements generated intrigue and excitement by touting his unprecedented height:

"the curious of all degrees resorted to see him, being sensible that a prodigy like this never made its appearance among us before; and the most penetrating have frankly declared, that neither the tongue of the most florid orator, or pen of the most ingenious writer, can sufficiently describe the elegance, symmetry, and proportion of this wonderful phenomenon in nature, and that all description must fall infinitely short of giving that satisfaction which may be obtained on judicious inspection."⁶⁴

The identifying texts again and again reinforced the singularity of his abnormal body and drew associations between Byrne and the most prestigious social and medical figures. The respectability of his exhibition was legitimized by the respectability of his viewers, an "abundance of the nobility and gentry, likewise the faculty, Royal Society [of Surgeons] and other admirers of natural curiosities, who allow him to surpass anything of the same kind ever offered to the public."⁶⁵ This tactic effectively appealed to all levels of his potential audience; the lower classes would have been charmed and impressed by his prestigious patrons at the same time that the elite were demonstrating that visiting such a phenomenon was not below them. His exhibition was even sanctioned as legitimate scientific inquiry by way of his appearance before the Royal Society of Surgeons. Unfortunately for the Irish Giant, his time in London was short. He died in 1783 after sinking into alcoholism and losing the entirety of his £770 fortune.

Byrne's career as an exhibited abnormal body, however, did not end with this death. Hunter's catalogue entry for the Irish Giant also provides insight into his post-mortem history. Shortly before his death, Charles Byrne requested a burial at sea in order to protect his remains. He was aware that several anatomists were anxious to obtain his body, so anxious in fact that when he did expire a "whole tribe of surgeons...surrounded his house just as Greenland harpooners would an enormous whale."⁶⁶ One newspaper reported that a surgeon had offered an 800 guinea ransom⁶⁷ to Byrne's undertaker, while another group of anatomists was prepared with a diving bell in order to retrieve Byrne's body from the sea floor.⁶⁸ Ultimately, John Hunter paid £500 (though some accounts state he paid as much as £800) to acquire the remains of the Irish Giant.⁶⁹ Hunter displayed Byrne's articulated skeleton along with the giant's boot, slipper, glove, and portrait in the section of his collection dedicated to the general osteology of man. Simon David John Chaplin, the former curator and director of the Hunterian, has commented that the overt identification with personal histories gave Hunter's preparations roles as both medical and social signifiers:⁷⁰

"to spectators possessed of (anatomical connoisseurship), many of the preparations in John Hunter's museum would have possessed significance not only in and of themselves as interesting preparations, but as evidence of particular instances of social or medical engagement—as the result of well-known cases, of publically-described experiments or of special gift transactions."⁷¹

His remains are more frequently mentioned than almost any other specimen in Hunter's pathology and physiology collections; the tale of his body's acquisition has become an apocryphal example of the lengths to which John Hunter would go to enhance his collection.

Another physiological anomaly famously displayed both before and after her death was the "Nondescript" or Baboon Woman, Julia Pastrana. Pastrana was thought to have been born in 1834 in the Sinaloa state of Mexico to a peasant woman of the "Root Digger" tribe. Her face and

body were covered with long black hair and an elongated jaw caused her teeth and lips to protrude in an ape-like manner.⁷² Julia's promotional material states that she was discovered working in the Governor's household by an American promoter who purchased her in 1854. He exhibited Julia throughout the United States, "exciting the greatest curiosity, especially among the medical faculty and Naturalists."⁷³ In 1858, Julia's second manager, Theodore Lent, arranged for the Nondescript to embark on a world tour. After leaving the states Lent married Julia, who became pregnant and delivered a baby in Moscow in 1860. The child inherited her condition but died shortly after birth, followed five days later by Julia who succumbed to post-partum complications. Not one to miss out on a financial opportunity, Lent had Julia and their child crudely embalmed and stuffed for display in a glass case.⁷⁴ Lent continued to tour with the bodies until his death in 1884.⁷⁵ The bodies were exhibited in Norway from 1921 until the 1970's when they toured the United States with the Million Dollar Midways. In February of 2013, over one hundred and fifty years since her "discovery" Julia's remains were repatriated to her native Mexico, and formally laid to rest.



Fig.3 Illustration of Julia Pastrana, the "Nondescript"

A promotional pamphlet advertising the “curious history of the Baboon Lady, Miss Julia Pastrana,” provides extensive insight into the “personal history” and identifying details that British visitors to Julia’s exhibit received. The pamphlet, published so that “the bulk of our readers should hasten to see this ‘world’s wonder,’ before she leaves these islands,” compiled newspaper ads, a history of the Digger Indians (the tribe Julia purportedly came from), physical descriptions, endorsements from scientific experts, anecdotal evidence of her character, and a statement from Lent imploring the curious to attend the exhibit. Like the identifying text for the Irish Giant, the rhetoric of the pamphlet exaggerates Julia’s indescribable appearance in an attempt to draw in visitors:

“Language fails us, when we attempt to depict the mingled sensations that filled our minds, at even a first sight of Miss Julia Pastrana. A closer inspection struck us with awe; a lengthened interview created astonishment unbounded; and a minute examination, compared with the printed history of her in our hands, which we purchased there, including an intense attention to her various entertaining performances...so inspired us with amazement and delight, that, ‘Strangely-formed Being!’—‘Singular-looking Creature!’—‘Wonderful Curiosity of Nature!’ and other ejaculations manifesting the excitement we were under, involuntarily escaped from our lips.”⁷⁶

An anecdote from her United States tour even quoted a judge who commented that she was “too great a curiosity to see without paying for it,”⁷⁷ thus justifying the admission fee. Though the identifying texts regarding Julia Pastrana were pointedly designed for marketing purposes, several key similarities to the texts describing the Irish Giant are obvious.

Charles Byrne’s catalogue entry and Julia Pastrana’s promotional pamphlet illustrate four key aspects that establish the created identity of abnormal bodies on exhibit. Both texts establish the ante-mortem celebrity of the body as the groundwork for the post-mortem value of the specimen. Each text draws upon associations between the living subject and characters of medical or social renown. The rarity and unique singularity of the living subject is emphasized as

a marketing tool for exhibition of the body before death, and justification for its transformation into displayed specimen after death. And finally, the exotic or exciting origin of the body is emphasized. The next section will introduce a more detailed discussion of these key aspects found in publications concerning commodified, displayed abnormal bodies of Charles Byrne and Julia Pastrana.

Aspects of the Text

Establishing the ante-mortem celebrity of a specimen through identifying text was often the easiest way to increase the worth of an exhibited anomalous body. Ruth Richardson observed that “the bodies of wealthy, intellectual, eccentric, insane, aristocratic, or otherwise medically ‘interesting’ people from the middle and upper class were obtained by various means”⁷⁸ for dissection and preparation for display. This tactic was widely practiced, but the evidence of such a purchasing pattern is perhaps best preserved in the surviving collection of Henry Wellcome. Wellcome, who collected extensively throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, bought several “souvenirs” (prepared body parts) of murderers which are still part of the Wellcome medical museum. Examination of these specimens led Richardson to comment that “the sense of curious assortment and assiduous care in the preservation of the identity of these parts is unmistakable, but so too is the knowledge that much of their significance is endowed by inscription. They resonate by association.”⁷⁹

The emotional resonance that modern viewers experience when visiting these specimens is not a new phenomenon. Contemporary visitors to exhibits of remarkable human remains, such as the writer Thomas de Quincey, felt their experience to be greatly enriched when the details of a specimen’s notorious past-life were revealed. Quincey, who visited Charles White’s medical

museum in Manchester in the early nineteenth century, happened upon the skeleton of a former highwayman, and, “was prompted into a long imaginative contemplation upon the criminal’s former activities.”⁸⁰ This type of personal identification would not have been unfamiliar to those who viewed the remains of former freak performers, as biographies⁸¹ of such individuals were widely included in middle- and working-class publications as well as medical journals.⁸² Such characters were famous and infamous across the classes of Victorian society and were very often considered individuals of consequence.⁸³ The catalogue entry for Charles Byrne attempts to establish to what extent this was true for the Irish Giant.

The entry sought to prove Byrne’s renown by citing thirteen newspaper and magazine excerpts hailing the Giant’s remarkable popularity as an exhibit. The catalogue entry reveals that Byrne exhibited in at least four different venues during his time in London, and the familiar tone of the last published notices indicates Byrne was a well-known character to the readership. Fierce competition between anatomists for possession of Byrne’s corpse again indicates that he was a recognizable figure within the medical community after only two years on exhibit (compared to Tom Thumb’s forty). One report claimed that “since the death of the Irish Giant, there have been more physical consultations held, than ever were convened to keep Henry VIII in existence.”⁸⁴ Though these reports are certainly exaggerated, they do convey the well-established celebrity of the Irish Giant prior to his death.

Similarly, Julia Pastrana’s pamphlet goes to great lengths to express her popularity and success as an exhibited physiological curiosity. The unknown author describes arriving at her exhibit at the Regent Gallery and needing to elbow his way through crowds of spectators just to glance at the Nondescript.⁸⁵ The pamphlet emphasized Julia’s popularity and social successes while touring America, as well as the great interest she generated within the communities of

medicine and natural philosophy. It is particularly significant that Julia was advertised as a solo exhibition. By 1858, the year of the pamphlet's publication, freakshows had established themselves as the most popular and practical method of profiting from the displays of living human oddities. Even the exceptionally successful General Tom Thumb appeared in P.T. Barnum's American Museum alongside multiple freak performers.⁸⁶ Though some performers were able to command large enough audiences as solo acts to profit from European and world tours, most living anomalies performed with circuses or in groups. Julia was advertised as a solo exhibit in an age of freak popularity. This alone speaks to the public interest and financial success that she created.

Another critically important way Julia and Charles' texts conveyed their celebrity was through documentation of the prestigious status of viewers who attended their exhibits. Associated personages were the second aspect of a created textual identity that greatly influences the specimen's value. Samuel J.M.M. Alberti's research has established that an item's provenance affected its status once assimilated into a museum collection;⁸⁷ more particularly, the value could be raised by the mention of medical practitioners attached to a body's history.⁸⁸ These individuals may have executed or observed surgical procedures on the body during its lifetime, dissected and prepared the specimen themselves, or previously owned/donated the specimen in question. Returning to Henry Wellcome's collection, Richardson describes Wellcome's "relics" as, "not the religious variety, but things previously belonging to notable medical men, evidently [Wellcome saw] them as in some way saintly enough to consecrate belongings."⁸⁹ In the case of anatomical oddities, this relationship was preserved by specimens prepared by or written about by famous medical men.

The ownership history and donation record of anatomical preparations played an especially significant role in determining the value of a specimen. Frequently, owners lived and worked among their specimens; collections were displayed in the residence of the owner who showed them off with pride. He was a living dimension of the exhibit ready to welcome in visitors who would, in turn, confer prestige upon his museum.⁹⁰ Similarly, the practice of donating specimens was mutually beneficial to the donor and the recipient. Donors gained assistance in publishing any work they had done on the specimen and gained an association with the recipient. In turn, the recipient received a preparation with the added luster of a published case history and public acknowledgment of the institutional status of their collection.⁹¹ By gifting a specimen, the donor was permanently and publicly associated with the object on display,⁹² a connection that was preserved repeatedly through medical collection catalogues, auction records, correspondence, and published case studies.

In the case of living human anomalies, medical testimonials were utilized to verify the authenticity of the freak performer. This had the potential to legitimize the freak act, but also to elevate the status of the exhibition. Often promotional material, such as the 1846 handbill advertising General Tom Thumb's appearance in London, emphasized connections between the performer and high status members of the medical world or social elite. Thumb's handbill claimed, "Her Majesty's physicians have pronounced him the most symmetrical Dwarf in the world!"⁹³ This passage invested Thumb with the dual status of the most eminent medical men of nineteenth century Britain, as well as a connection to royalty. Though references to royalty were a popular tactic in freak marketing,⁹⁴ exhibited bodies could also benefit from run-of-the-mill medical associations. An 1899 classified advertisement for "High-Class Prodigies" in *The Era* declared that it "will always pay a fair price for all who have testimonials from Schools of

Medicine.”⁹⁵ Associations with medical figures and the social elite were both distinctive methods employed in the creation of Julia Pastrana and Charles Byrne’s textual identities.

Published references to Byrne’s exhibition repeatedly emphasized his connections with the nobility and gentry. One newspaper quoted in Byrne’s catalogue entry claimed he had received the “repeated approbation of numbers of the first characters in Great Britain and Ireland, as well as foreigners of the first distinction, from several of whom he has had the most pressing invitations to visit the continent.”⁹⁶ Other publications accentuated the Irish Giant’s popularity among the gentry, nobility, and connoisseurs of natural phenomena. However, the most important association communicated thorough the catalogue entry is Charles Byrne’s connection to John Hunter. Hunter was the most eminent surgeon of his time, and widely reputed to be the most skilled practitioner of dissection. The remains of the Irish Giant were both purchased and prepared by Hunter, instilling them with his reputation for technical skill and penchant for collecting the best and most fascinating specimens. In nearly every modern mention of the Irish Giant, his story is inextricably tied to Hunter’s name and the reputation of the Hunterian museum.

Julia Pastrana’s textual history was also enriched by the professional cachet of well-known medical men. Julia’s pamphlet included endorsements from three different medical figures: Dr. Alex B. Mott, a naturalist; Samuel Kneeland, Jr, former curator of comparative anatomy at the Boston Society of Natural History; and Professor S. Brainerd, M.D.⁹⁷ These three men fulfilled the important function of legitimizing Julia’s strange appearance, but they also generated interest in her exhibition by offering conflicting theories as to the cause of her abnormality. Dr. Mott praised Julia:

“a perfect woman—a rational creature, endowed with speech, which no monster has ever possessed. She is therefore a HYBRID, wherein the nature of woman

predominates over the brute—the Orang-Outan. Altogether she is the most extraordinary being of the day.”⁹⁸

Dr. Mott was of the firm belief that Julia was a hybrid creature, the product of a human and an orangutan. Samuel Kneeland confirmed that she was “certainly human,” perhaps a member of an Indian tribe of Asiatic origin.⁹⁹ Professor Brainerd was asked to analyze her hair for indications of negroid ancestry, of which he found none, and pronounced, “her other peculiarities, the hair upon her body, its length and structure, the form of the mouth and nose, the size of her limbs, peculiarities of her breasts, &c., and various other features, entitle her, I think, to the rank of a DISTINCT SPECIES.”¹⁰⁰ Julia’s pamphlet concluded by reviving the issue of her very nature in a statement by her manager: “Miss Julia is a *curiosity* of remarkable interest, and must be seen to be fully appreciated. She is worthy of a special visit, if it be but to realize something of the profound riddle in which the origin of the *Aborigines of America* is involved.”¹⁰¹ Unlike the Irish Giant, Julia’s associations with medical figures functioned primarily to involve the potential viewer in a debate as to the scientific origins of her deformity. This integrated her created personal history, a small child discovered in the wilderness of Mexico among bears and monkeys taken into the governor’s employ, into the marketing of her act and textual identity.

Unlike specimen’s originating from the Georgian period but displayed and renown throughout the Victorian period (such as the Irish Giant), bodies who’s textual identity was constructed during the late nineteenth century, like Julia, were drawn into an increasingly scientific popular discourse. Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species*, the foundational work in evolutionary biology, was published in 1859 and began to restructure the ways many medical and laymen viewed the role and purpose of the abnormal body. Throughout the late nineteenth century, “popular understanding of evolutionary theory structured audience’s approach to the freak show, as the anomalous bodies on display were often interpreted as steps on the

evolutionary ladder.”¹⁰² Often, “the key to the showman’s success was getting the scientific community interested in the specimens and involved in a debate concerning their origin.”¹⁰³ This marketing tactic was clearly evident in the medical testimonies in Julia’s pamphlet. The Doctors’ testimonials also served the vital purpose of highlighting her rarity. Rarity is the next key aspect of creating identity through text.

In the early seventeenth century new methods of scientific understanding and inquiry caused monsters to lose their portent value. Instead, they became prized reflections of nature’s magnificence and were recorded for their rarity.¹⁰⁴ Assembling cabinets of curiosity became a popular way of displaying anatomical and pathological preparations in the seventeenth and early eighteenth century, and were often the roots of private anatomy collections amassed in the late 1700s. Research done by Simon David John Chaplin on dissection in the late eighteenth century has established that,

anatomists still prized rarity when choosing to preserve or present preparations. Their definitions of rarity, however, shifted away from the simply ‘marvelous’ and towards a more tightly defined notion of uncommonness rooted in an understanding of the structure of the body in health and disease.¹⁰⁵

This shift towards understanding anomaly within the context of the healthy or diseased human body was made possible by developments in 17th-century medical education which consolidated practical anatomy within the medical curriculum. Medical discourse now reconciled anatomical study with the case histories of individual patients.¹⁰⁶ This was evident in published accounts of post-mortem dissections that treated the patients as individuals, as opposed to generic objects used to teach human anatomy.¹⁰⁷ Still, this new consideration only reached so far. The medical priority during surgery concerned the pathological anomaly, such as excising a kidney stone, rather than the patient’s life.¹⁰⁸ Surgeons and physicians, such as Sir Astley Cooper, who ran a

free clinic from his home to trawl for “interesting cases,”¹⁰⁹ collected for and from their practices in order to amass comprehensive cabinets of anatomy. They autopsied patients from their private practices and hospitals alike at the first opportunity.

However beneficial the developing medicalization of physical deformity might have been for surgeons and physicians, most proprietors of living human oddities rejected the diagnosis of their freaks. A concrete medical diagnosis would jeopardize the showman’s claim that his oddity was a rare and unique natural phenomenon.¹¹⁰ Since wildly exaggerated claims of a living oddity’s singularity constituted the bulk of freakshow marketing, the proprietor of such acts walked a thin line in order to retain the endorsements and publicity generated by physicians and surgeons while resisting official diagnosis.

The newspaper references to Charles Byrne in his catalogue entry contain repeated exaggerations of his singularity amongst performing “giants.” The advertisements routinely added five to seven inches to his height, heralding him as “the tallest man in the world,” a living colossus that surpassed anything ever offered for public exhibit,¹¹¹ “the most extraordinary production of the human species ever beheld since the days of Goliath.”¹¹² These amplifications were designed to distinguish the Irish Giant from other giants from Scotland and Ireland performing in London during 1782 and 1783. One such giant, Patrick Cotter, also worked under the name O’Brien *and* called himself the Irish Giant, which has caused periodic confusion in published records of the two men.¹¹³ The Hunterian catalogue includes an engraving of Byrne with the Knipe brothers, two “gigantic” Irish brothers who also exhibited in London. This portrait clearly established Byrne as the tallest figure, and distinguished him as the most remarkable of the exhibiting giants in 1783 Great Britain. His rarity in death was therefore substantiated by visual evidence of his singularity in life.

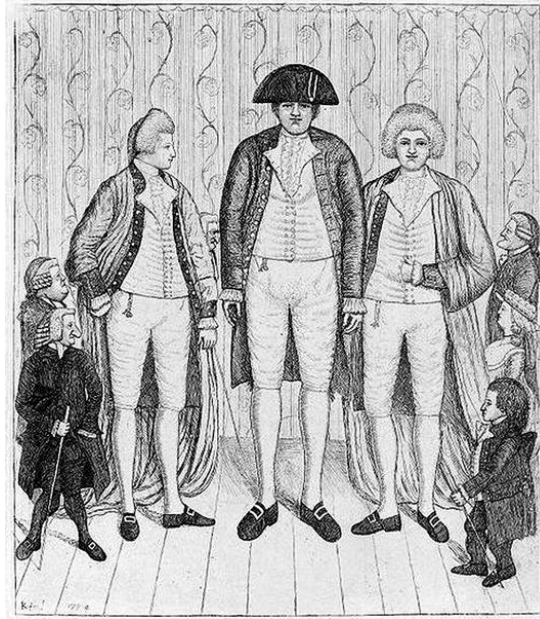


Fig.4 John Kay's engraving "Three Giants, with a Group of Spectators" (1783) depicts Charles Byrne and the Knipe brothers.¹¹⁴

Unlike the Irish Giant, Julia Pastrana was portrayed as truly one of a kind. The medical testimonials in her literature postulated that she may even have been an entirely new species. Julia's literature depicted her as unique on multiple levels. The pamphlet initially stressed the singularity of her tribe, the "Digger Indians," who "of all the Aborigines known within the limits of the Western Continent...are certainly the most filthy and abominable."¹¹⁵ But not Miss Julia. Though she appeared to be the most savage of them because of her deformity,

"she is kindly and affable, and she endeavors to please everybody. She is aware that she is on exhibition, and understands that all who visit her expect to be satisfied that there is no attempt or imposition made upon their curiosity or credulity...she is always cheerful."¹¹⁶

Julia was so civilized as to submit to examination and inquisition, "as if willing to advance the cause of science or to gratify the laudable curiosity of all who attend at her public levee."¹¹⁷ She is even described as "having previously learned the waltz by some *natural* intuition."¹¹⁸ The papers of the day lauded her as "the wonder of the world," a most "singular" hybrid that had the

body of a beast but could speak and sing in English and Spanish, in addition to dancing the Highland and Scottish fling.¹¹⁹ Julia was portrayed as the most subdued of the savage Digger Indians, a temperamental anomaly unto her people and a physical oddity unto all.

Mentions of savage societies were often included in documents relating the history and identity of anatomical specimens. The origin of a preparation, which was often exotic, is perhaps the most compelling detail within a specimen's history capable of increasing the value of the object. In instances of limited case history, origin was frequently connected with provenance to create a micro-narrative of the abnormal body's past life capable of sparking the imagination of the viewer. Some curiosities were not deformed at all, but qualified as scientifically (and socially) fascinating because they came from different races or cultures.¹²⁰ Other abnormal bodies had the dual advantage of deformation and exotic origins.

One such man, a 37"-tall dwarf named Mohammed Baux, was advertised as the "miniature man of India." Freak scholar Marlene Tromp argues that "in Baux's case, the exhibition of his colonized and racially other body gave him a potential advertising edge over the dozens of other performing little people."¹²¹ Baux and Laloo, an Indian man famous for having the legs of his parasitic twin sprouting from his chest, were marketed by their ethnicity as much as by their physical deformity. Both were striking markers of their dissimilarity from the British viewing audience.¹²² Many performers of this sort sold pamphlets containing the thrilling stories of their early life and journey to England at their exhibits. Though these accounts were embellished and often fantastical, they appealed to a Victorian audience in love with adventure tales of exploration and imperial expansion. Most stories fabricated as part of exotic presentations did contain some kernel of truth that drew from actual scientific expeditions, colonial struggles, and exploration of the non-western world.¹²³ The arrival of the original

“Siamese” twins Chang and Eng in England was part of a larger tradition wherein expeditions sought exotic curiosities to ship back to Britain as potentially valuable commodities.¹²⁴ It is not difficult to envision Julia Pastrana’s journey from rural Mexico to the metropolitan centers of Europe and America in just such a light.

Pastrana’s pamphlet provides an extensive description of the Digger Indians (with references to other Indian tribes of the American West) as an introduction to her origin story. These passages depict the Diggers as savage beings, hardly elevated above the wild animals that roamed their lands. The patronizing descriptions of Julia’s tribe are hardly surprising, given the paternalistic tone that colors much of the Victorian adventure genre, but they do enhance the juxtaposition of a comparatively civilized Julia with the rest of her kin. The aforementioned designation of the Diggers as “the most filthy and abominable” of the native tribes serves to further sensationalize the origin of the Nondescript, which the pamphlet claims is “involved in obscurity.”¹²⁵ Though Julia’s origin provides a fascinating and intriguingly exotic introduction to her pamphlet, what does seem clear is that the textual construction of Julia’s identity begins in conjunction with her exhibition. Her personality, skills, opinions, and title are all described in the context of, and contingent upon, her exhibited state. Her “identity” had undergone the process of enfreakment, as dictated by her manager (although in the text Lent is always referred to as her guardian).

Byrne’s catalogue entry utilizes exotic origin to a far lesser degree. More so even than Julia’s pamphlet, Byrne’s description in the Hunterian catalogue focused almost exclusively on his performing life. Nevertheless, origin and race do matter in the creation of Byrne’s identity as the Irish Giant. The connotations of being the *Irish* Giant would not have been lost on Byrne or his manager. His nationality was not merely a regional identifier to differentiate him from other

performing tall men, but a title that carried associations of ignorant savagery, and a bestial nature befitting a “giant.” Throughout the Georgian and Victorian periods the Irish were depicted in popular media and literature as unruly savages, constantly revolting against a civilized England.¹²⁶ The notorious sloth, greed, violence, and stupidity of giants portrayed in traditional folk tales aligned with characteristics most Victorians had come to think of as typically Irish. The especially popular representation of “Paddy” as a chronically destitute, fiscally irresponsible alcoholic meshes alarmingly well with the character presented in Byrne’s catalogue entry.

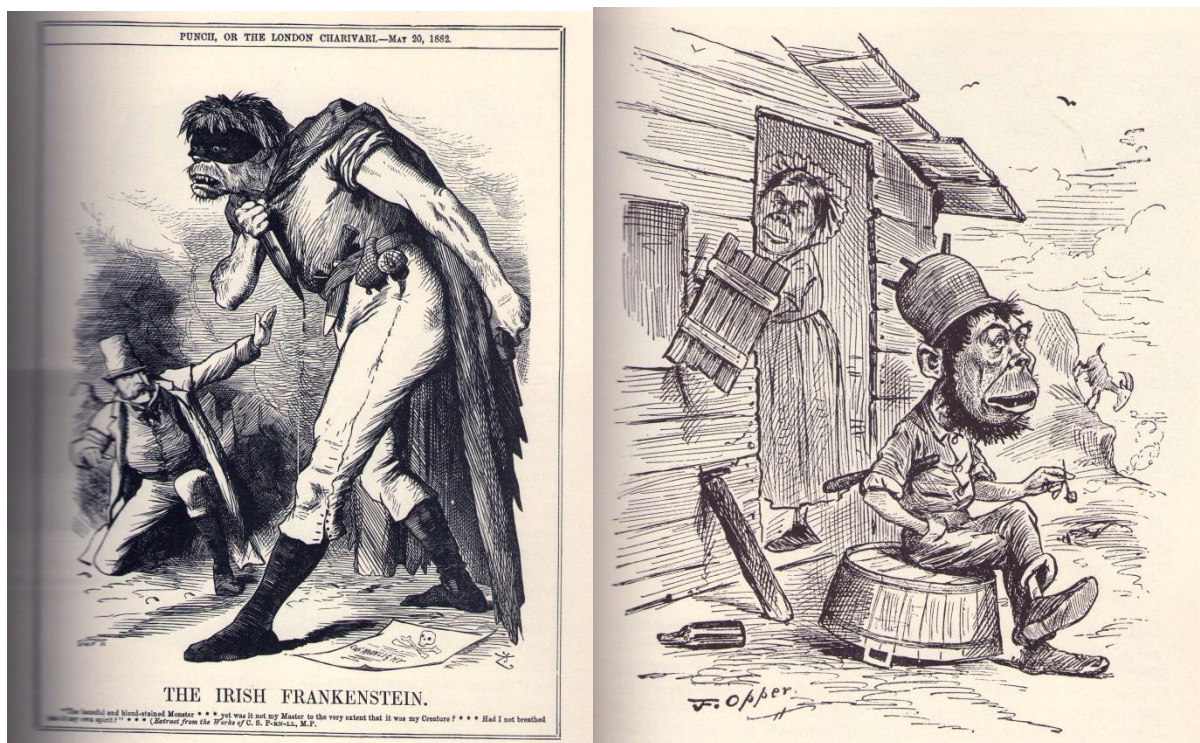


Fig. 5 and 6. 19th-century representations of monstrous Irish and drunken Paddy in British publications.¹²⁷

The connection is disturbingly transparent in the anecdote accounting for the circumstances surrounding his death, as related by the entry. For some unknown reason, two months before his demise, the Irish Giant had consolidated all of his property into two banknotes, totaling £770. Byrne, who was already a heavy drinker by the time he arrived in

London, had “taken a lunar ramble” to a public house called the Black Horse and discovered upon returning home that all of his money had disappeared from his pocket. This precipitated even heavier drinking, and a gradual decline in health that terminated in his death.¹²⁸

The account of Byrne’s death provided by the Hunterian catalogue plainly reflects the themes associated with “Irishness” in the Victorian Period. Although it is unclear to what extent these themes factored into the Giant’s advertising and exhibition while still alive, stereotypical hallmarks of Irish nationality played an exoticizing role in the origin story and identifying literature created for Byrne’s exhibited remains.

The catalogue entry for specimen 223, Charles Byrne “the Irish Giant,” is an especially useful lens for examining the creation of an abnormal body’s textual identity because it consciously utilizes other published references to the Giant. It is therefore both a window into how the Giant’s identity was presented while alive, and a deliberate construction of post-mortem identity and history. Though Julia Pastrana’s pamphlet is detailed, it only reveals how her identity was constructed while she was alive.

This paper has thus far established the types and aspects of texts that create and communicate the identity of exhibited anatomical oddities. It has ascertained that the identity of curious bodies being marketed and displayed was that of commodified object rather than living (or once living) persons. This paper has also established that these bodies, both dead and alive, were in high demand as subjects of spectacle and science. The concluding section will examine the auction as a process of valuation, wherein the case history, exoticism, provenance, and rarity of a deformed body converged to increase the desirability and value of a preparation.

The Auction

Aside from the practice of donation, auctions were the most common method of acquiring anatomical or pathological preparations made by a variety of medical men. This had obvious benefits for practitioners who were not skilled in dissection or preparation, or who had limited access to interesting cases. Private auctions for medical specimens sprang up in the early eighteenth century alongside natural history auctions.¹²⁹ Anatomical auctions were exhibitions unto themselves, where the audience helped determine the value of the commodified remains on display. “Unlike standard commodity exchange, the catalogues, the ballyhoo, the provenances, and the buyers all contributed to establishing the net worth of the body parts on sale.”¹³⁰ Anatomical items were routinely valued above other material treasures,¹³¹ and specimens that retained case history or identifying details commanded the highest prices.¹³² The auction catalogue from the sale of Joshua Brookes’s anatomical collection offers some insight into exactly what elements of a specimen’s identity were valued at auction.

Joshua Brookes was a prominent Georgian surgeon and medical instructor. His school on Blenheim Street housed his collection of over 6,000 anatomical and pathological preparations, a collection which took 30 years to complete. He reputedly spent over 30,000 pounds acquiring preparations, though an immense sum for the time it paled in comparison to the 100,000 pounds John Hunter invested in his collection.¹³³ Brookes’s massive anatomical and zoological collection went to auction in July of 1828, and although little evidence survives of the prices collectors paid for Brookes’s preparations, the auction catalogue has preserved the lot descriptions containing any traces of specimen history and identity.¹³⁴

The majority of lots for sale at the auction were accompanied by scant contextual information, if any context was listed at all. Because of this, the lots that have even a scrap of case history or ownership history stand out. Provenance, in the form of associated figures of

social or medical standing, was emphasized more than any other aspect of specimen identity.¹³⁵ Fifty eight of the eighty one human specimens in the auction records which were remarkable due to case history or identifying details were notable solely because the provenance was included. It is obvious that diligently recorded associated medical practitioners or donors were integral to establishing the provenance of these preparations. Although, it is unclear if this is because provenance was the most important factor in increasing specimen worth, or because this information was the easiest to obtain as it entered the collection.

Medical case history was preserved in nine instances, almost exclusively partnered with some detail of ownership history.¹³⁶ There was little justification obvious to the layman, such as specimen rarity, for the remarkability of specimens associated with medical men. Presumably, the buyer of such an item would have been a medical man who could judge for himself the item's medical rarity and appreciate the prestigious associations attached to its history. Specimens of exotic origin or race, of which fifteen preparations were listed, were more obviously special. The descriptions of these remains, which include a mummy, a scrap of tattooed skin depicting the capture of Captain Cook and the bound foot of a Chinese woman, alluded to rarity as well as exotic lands.

Ethnological curiosity surrounding negroid anatomy¹³⁷ is evident in five of the fifteen specimens, particularly two preparations designed to closely compare the skin of a European with the skin of an Ethiopian.¹³⁸ This is unsurprising in an era enraptured with the burgeoning field of ethnology. Additionally, four specimens claim to be taken from infamous murderers, thus establishing their ante-mortem celebrity.¹³⁹ These specimen descriptions, which describe the method and location of the murder, are perhaps the most narratively captivating of the auction.

The auction record includes three specimens taken from former freaks.¹⁴⁰ Two from the Irish Giant Charles O'Brien (it is unclear if this is the same Irish Giant in Hunter's collection or if the specimens were taken from Patrick Cotter who also called himself O'Brien the Irish Giant and exhibited in London in 1763,) and one goiter-ed specimen taken from a native of the Alps who was said to have performed in London with his family. Like the preparations made from the bodies of murderers, these freak remains invite the audience to draw upon popular narratives of well-known figures that had been circulated through the press and by word of mouth.

Through the case history, the patient's name, the remains' celebrity, the specimen's rarity, the anomaly's exotic origin or the curiosity's distinguished provenance, "the preparation was imbued with a narrative, scripted by the anatomist but spoken through the patient's own body."¹⁴¹ The auction represented a dynamic scene of commodity exchange wherein the textual aspects used to build specimen identity took center stage in the process of valuation.

In the same way that anatomists scripted narratives of abnormal remains, showmen scripted the stories of their freaks, through texts emphasizing exotic origins, celebrity status, elite patrons, and claims of singularity. By utilizing similarly structured textual identities as contexts for viewing, the abnormal physiology of living freaks and long deceased remains on exhibit achieved cultural, intellectual and monetary value far surpassing their more normal equivalents.

Their embellished, exaggerated and fantastical stories were preserved initially through newspaper advertisements, then through medical reports and post-mortems as case history became an important part of understanding the human body in the early nineteenth century. As public literacy increased and institutional collections opened their doors in the early Victorian period, catalogue entries and specimen labels became an invaluable way of communicating and preserving the identity of monstrous remains. Finally, as freak shows became the easiest and

cheapest way of viewing the abnormal body, true life booklets and medical reports advertised the identity of unusual bodies. The more fully literate and educated audiences of the mid to late nineteenth century could engage more fully than their predecessors in the scientifically oriented discussions of the abnormal body put forth by these types of texts.

Rarity and provenance were highly prized by collectors and audiences alike. The textual identities of monstrous bodies illustrated these qualities by emphasizing the prestigious personages associated with the specimen, its exotic origins or its celebrity. These aspects differentiated abnormal bodies from more ordinary, anonymous specimens, and increased the specimen's worth and educational or cultural value. The consciously constructed micro-narrative histories of freak performers and pathological preparations speak to the qualities that drew Georgian and Victorian audiences to view curious, and sometimes grotesque, bodies that were so very different from their own. Qualities that are still capable of capturing the imagination of modern audiences.

Appendix 1: Remarkable medical specimens in the Brookes collection auction catalogue

Associated Practitioners or Provenance

No.	Lot	Description
1	2	Cast of an immense steatomatous tumor attached to the side of the face and head, from which it was successfully extirpated by Sir Everard Home, at St. George's Hospital. N.B. The patient (a female) is very little disfigured.
1	7	Cast of a disease of the diploe of the os frontale, occasioned by hydatides in a young woman... The osseous tumor was opened by Mr. Keate, at St. George's Hospital
1	9	Cast of the dreadful disease denominated Noli me tangere, taken from a patient in the Middlesex hospital (post-mortem), attended by Thomas Lichfield, Esq. (then dressing-pupil), the donor.
1	25	Cast of a very large injected placenta. Presented by Dr. Hooper
1	27	A most extraordinary instance of immense hernia umbilicalis in a child two or three days old: or rather, an interesting case of extra-abdominal viscera from the absence of muscular parietes... Presented by—Adams Esq. who delivered the mother.
1	30	Elytocele, with uterus, its appendages, bladder, &c. Presented by Dr. Hooper
1	51	[Cast] from the original [cranium], found by Dr. Leach in the Catacombs at Paris
1	55	[Cast of the cranium] of another idiot eight years of age. Presented by Dr. Scott
1	87	An uncommonly fine specimen of spina ventosa of the leg, which was amputated by Mr. Pott, about half a century ago, in St. Bartholomew's Hospital; the cast of the bone, No.

		190. The original is in the possession of Sir Ludford Harvey; both casts were made by Mr. Brookes.
1	94	A magnificent cast of spina ventosa of the os brachii, amputated at the shoulder joint by Sir Astley Cooper.
1	104	Cast of a case of disease of knee-joint, amputated successfully by Mr. Brookes.
1	134	A most beautiful and accurately executed cast of an enormous scrotal hernia of forty years duration. The whole of the hernia contained in its sac is preserved in spirits in Compartment H, no. 54, in the Gallery. Mr. Brookes operated for this case in consultation with Sir James Earle and Mr. Cates.
1	139	A fine cast of a very large scrophulous testis, successfully extirpated by Mr. Brooks, being previously moulded(sic) from the patient by – Alcock, Esq.
2	171	A beautiful and faithful cast of the face of a young lady, a patient of Mr. Brookes, who was afflicted with polypus of the nose and disease of the antrum.
2	194	An uncommonly fine cast of a case of ruptured uterus, moulded(sic) under Mr. Brookes's superintendence: in this cast the foetus having passed through the laceration into the abdomen during parturition, is seen amidst the vicera. <i>Vide</i> the case published by the late Dr. Blegborough in the Medical and Physical Journal.
2	201	A cast of a most extraordinary case of a foetus found in the abdomen of a boy sixteen years of age, moulded(sic) under Mr. Brookes's superintendence from the original, which is now in the Museum of the Royal College of Surgeons.
2	202	Superb specimen of spina ventosa of the head of tibia, taken from the identical limb NO. 75, amputated by Mr. Pott.
2	212	A cast of the largest calculus that, perhaps, was ever successfully extracted. Mr. Deare's knife was used for the operation.
2	220	An uncommonly fine cast of a young married lady, who died in parturition from rupture of the uterus, which organ, and placenta, with the abdominal viscera, are all represented: moulded under Mr. Brookes's superintendence.
2	225	An uncommonly fine bust of an adult patient, afflicted with an antrum case, or fungous disease of the sinus pituitarius maxillaries. This and the two preceding casts were presented by Dr. Hooper.
2	235	Fungus haematodes of the hand and fingers, for the cure of which Mr. Hunter amputated the little finger; and ten years after, Mr. Chevalier the ring-finger and disease, in consultation with Mr. Brookes.
2	236	Cast of a case of fungus haematodes, for which Mr. Brodie amputated the arm at St. George's Hospital.
2	256	A torso, moulded under Mr. Brookes's superintendence, from the living subject afflicted with an immense osteo sarcomatous tumour situated on the right hip. An operation was performed for the relief of the patient by Sir Astley Cooper.
2	266	A cast of an inferior extremity, moulded(sic) under Mr. Brookes's inspection, of an uncommonly fine illustration of fungus haematodes, for which the limb was amputated by Mr. Lynn at the Westminster Hospital.
6	56	Diseased and thickened bladder with enlarged prostate gland, the middle lobe projecting over the commencement of urethra, in the membranous part of which there is an ulcerated opening, communicating with the rectum. Four caniculi were found in the bladder; vide No.57, presented by – Want, Esq. who attended the patient.
6	63	A very fine specimen of the termination of the urethra at the lower part of the abdomen in a morbid excrescence, in consequence of the absence of the urinary bladder. Presented by – North, Esq. who attended the patient. N.B. This preparation is also a specimen of imperforated hymen.
6	72	Hydatids voided per urethram, from a patient of Mr. Hallam, attended by Mr. Brookes.

6	73	Ditto from a patient of Sir Anthony Carlisle.
6	81	An uncommonly fine illustration of morbid and sacculated bladder; the prostate gland is much enlarged, with the middle lobe increased in magnitude so considerably as to have produced retention of urine for the last three months of the patient's life: this disease is accompanied by a stricture of the rectum, which may be seen very distinctly. Presented by – Tipple Esq., Mitcham, by whom the patient was attended for the purpose of introducing the catheter twice per diem.
6	85	A very fine preparation of morbid bladder and prostate gland, accompanied with fungi extending into the interior of the viscus. There are two ureters on one side terminating by and individual opening in the bladder. N.B. the patient from whom the above specimen was removed died of retention of urine. Presented by W. Lyan, Esq.
6	87	An uncommonly fine preparation of a sacculated bladder and morbid prostate gland which is enlarged posteriorly as well as anteriorly; the three lobes projecting considerably into the cavity of the bladder, where impeding the exit of the urine, produced fatal retention. N.B. there are two ureters on one side, terminating by a single orifice; the vesicle seminales are dissected, and the peritoneal coat is partially removed from the bladder to show the muscular fibres. Presented by Thomas Copeland, Esq.
6	90	A sacculated bladder, taken from a patient on whom Mr. Brodie performed the operation for stone at St. George's Hospital; the calculus was lodged in a sacculus, from whence it was extracted. The stone, with the morbid parts, some time after the operation were presented by B.C. Brodie, Esq.
6	91	A morbid bladder and urethra, taken from a young subject that had been a patient of Mr. Brookes's. A calculus was lodged in the urethra, which may be seen very much enlarged about its middle. N.B. One kidney is much diseased.
7	20	A specimen of a kidney, the structure of which is morbidly changed, the pelvis is filled by very large calculi. Presented by – Semple, Esq.
7	30	A section of a most splendid and minutely injected human kidney, showing the internal structure and tubuli uriniferi. Presented by Dr. Hooper.
18	3	A beautiful specimen of the testis, minutely injected with mercury, illustrating all the seminal anatomy of the organ. Presented by Sir Astley Cooper.
18	28	A most interesting specimen (injected) of carcinomatous fungus of the whole of the glans penis. Amputated and presented by Thomas Copeland, Esq.
18	35	A testis (extirpated and presented by Sir Anthony Carlisle,) taken from an individual who for the last forty years of his life passed for a female.
18	36	A very fine specimen of fungus of heamatodes of the testis. Extirpated and presented by Anthony White, Esq.
18	46	A very fine and large specimen of scrofulous affection of the testis; successfully extirpated by Mr. Brookes.
18	61	An iron ring removed by P. Copeland, Esq. from the penis of a patient who had passed it on over the glans penis, which because so alarmingly tumefied as to require being cut through.
18	64	A very fine specimen of fungus of heamatodes of the testis. Extirpated and presented by B.C. Brodie, Esq.
18	68	A preparation from a monorchis, or the testis (from a boy of ten years of age), not yet descended for the cavity of the abdomen into the scrotum. Presented by Dr. Underwood in the year 1801.
18	71	Several feet (about nine) of the small intestines from a nurse at Westminster Hospital: she was afflicted with ventral hernia, the sac of which burst, and in consequence the intestines protruded, and became mortified; notwithstanding the patient lived several days. On examination post mortem, the cavity of the abdomen was closed (by the adhesive

		inflammation) all around the margin of the hernia. Presented by Sir Anthony Carlisle.
19	62	A truly interesting specimen of fungus Heamatodes in the intercostal muscles. Presented by ---- Ewbank, jun. Esq.
19	83	A most extraordinary specimen of an ossification in the form of an oval box, or a very large egg, situated in the center of a human spleen: this osseous cavity was replete with hydatides. Presented by the late Mr. Banfeild, Surgeon, R.N.
19	88	A preparation of inflamed and thickened membrane covering the epiglottis and arytenoid cartilages. The glandule amygduae are also much inflamed and enlarged. From a patient in St. George's Hospital afflicted with syphilis, who died suddenly from inspissated mucus impacted in the rima glottides. Presented by --- Brodie, Esq.
19	94	An immensely large kidney replete with sacculi. Presented by James Brookes, Esq.
19	95	A morbid breast, weighing nine pounds, extirpated at St. George's Hospital by C.I. Brodie, Esq.
19	96	The liver and stomach of a woman, a patient of Dr. Temple and Mr. Donnelly. The liver contained a great quantity of hydatides, or rather, was a cast replete with those animals, some of which had passed into the stomach through an opening where the two viscera adhered.
19	97	A most extraordinary case of an enlarged uterus to nearly the full period of uterogestation, occasioned by a tumor occupying the whole of the interior of the organ. Presented by – O'Connor, Esq.
23	20-23	Taken from the same patient in St. George's Hospital under the care of Mr. Ewbank, and by that gentleman presented to Mr. Brookes.
29	25	The eye of a man afflicted with fungus heamatodes: extirpated at St. George's Hospital, and presented by --- Ewbank, Esq.
29	89	Specimen of the optic nerve, very much elongated in consequence of a tumour formed at the bottom of the orbit: from a patient in Denl Hospital. Presented by Copeland Hutchinson, Esq.
29	122	A very fine specimen of an aneurism of the sinus nortae, which enlarging anteriorly caused an absorption of the sternum, and a considerable tumour between the breasts, and increasing also posteriorly compressed the trachea, and occasioned death by suffocation; - from a female patient under the care of Mr. Jaques, by whom the disease was presented.

Race or Exotic Origin

No.	Lot	Description
1	50	Cast of the cranium of a Caribbean native of St. Vincent's.—The original is in the museum of St. Thomas's Hospital.
1	52	Cast of the head of a Genevese idiot twenty-eight years of age. Presented by Dr. Scott
1	53	Cast of the head of a Dutch idiot twenty-two years of age. Presented by Dr. Scott
2	224	A very fine cast of the bust of a native of the Alps, afflicted with goiter, or bronchocele. This individual and two relatives (of whom there is a representation of in the picture room) were exhibited in London some years ago.
2	257	The statue of a Chinese youth of about seventeen or eighteen years of age, having an animated foetus growing from the abdomen. Modelled (sic) from life about three years ago, and presented by Robert Simmons, Esq.
2	268	A fine cast from nature of a double foetus with a single head, of nearly full growth. The mother, a Maltese, delivered at Malta, and the specimen presented by Dr. H. Davis.
18	62	A remarkably large penis of a Negro (injected).
19	89	The lower part of the leg, with the foot of a Chinese lady, showing the effect of early and permanent pressure.
28	18	A specimen of tattooed skin from the breast of a circumnavigator, illustrating the death of

		Captain Cook.
28	26	Portion of skin, showing the cutis, rete mucosum, and cuticle, of a negro.
28	27	Portion of tattooed skin from a seaman, dried, and immersed in oil of turpentine.
28	31	A preparation of skin of the European, showing cutis, rete Malpighianum, and cuticle.
28	32	Ditto, for the Ethiopian, simply in spirits.
28	64	The sacred Ibis (a mummy from the catacombs of Saccara).
29	125	An uncommonly fine specimen of a double foetus at the full period of growth, born in Jamaica of a Negress. Presented by Doctor Barnard.

Ante-/Post-Mortem Celebrity

No.	Lot	Description
1	45	[Cast of the head] of Sharpe, the assassin who murdered the mistress of a chandler's shop at Kentish Town. The original cranium is contained in a glass case in the Saloon.
1	46	Cast of the cranium of—Bellingham, the assassin who shot the Hon. Mr. Percival, the prime minister, in the lobby of the House of Commons.
1	101	Cast of the face of Williams, the murderer of the Marr family.
2	146	A beautiful and perfect cast of the hand of O'Brien, the Irish Giant.
2	255	The bust of—O'Brien, the Irish Giant, who was upwards of nine feet in stature. He is interred in the Roman Catholic chapel at Bristol.
2	259	The cast cranium of Robert Bruce King of Scotland.
2	262	The mask of an assassin who was executed for murder.
22	117	A fibula, taken out of the coffin of Duke Humphery in St. Albans Cathedral. (Sir Anthony Carlisle).

¹ The Royal College of Surgeons, *Catalogue of the Contents of the Museum of the Royal College of Surgeons in London. Parts V. & VI. Comprehending the Preparations of Monsters and Malformed Parts, in Spirit, and in a Dried State*, (London: Richard Taylor, 1831), 68.

² The Royal College of Surgeons, 68-74.

³ Victoria Carroll, "Natural History on Display: the Collection of Charles Waterton," in *Science and the Marketplace: Nineteenth-Century Sites and Experiences*, eds. Allen Fyfe and Bernard Lightman (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), 217.

⁴ Nadja Durbach, *Spectacle of Deformity: Freakshows and Modern British Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 5.

⁵ Samuel J.M.M. Alberti, "Owning and Collecting Natural Objects in Nineteenth-Century England," in *From Private to Public: Natural Collections and Museums*, ed. Marco Beretta, (USA: Science History Publications, 2005), 152.

⁶ Erin O'Connor, *Raw Material: Producing Pathology in Victorian Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 150.

⁷ Robert Bogdan, *Freakshow: Presenting Human Oddities for Amusement and Profit* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 10.

⁸ O'Connor, 189.

⁹ Barnum rented a mansion for Tom Thumb's first appearance in London. He sent invitations to the nobility and several key newspaper editors for an invitation-only exhibit of Thumb in order to gain the interest and approbation of the royalty. These showings, and others like them, are referred to as "athomes." See Collin Clair, *Human Curiosities* (London: Abelard-Schuman, 1968), 122.

¹⁰ Lisa A. Kochanek, "Reframing the Freak: From Sideshow to Science," *Victorian Periodicals Review*, vol.30, no.3 (1997): 230.

¹¹ See Simon David John Chaplin, "John Hunter and the 'Museum Oeconomy: 1750-1800,'" (PhD diss., University of London, 2009) for a thorough investigation of the role dissection and anatomical preparations played in eighteenth century medical education and collecting.

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- ¹² Samuel J.M.M. Alberti, "The Museum Affect: Visiting Collections of Anatomy and Natural History," in *Science and the Marketplace: Nineteenth-Century Sites and Experiences*, eds. Allen Fyfe and Bernard Lightman (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), 374.
- ¹³ Alberti, "Museum Affect," 373.
- ¹⁴ Kochanek, 229.
- ¹⁵ Arjun Appadura, "Commodities and the Politics of Value," in *Interpreting Objects and Collections*, ed. Susan M. Pearce (London: Routledge, 1994), 85.
- ¹⁶ Bogdan, 8-9.
- ¹⁷ Durbach, "Spectacle," 5.
- ¹⁸ Bogdan, 95.
- ¹⁹ Samuel J.M.M. Alberti, *Morbid Curiosities: Medical Museums in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 24.
- ²⁰ Durbach, "Spectacle," 49.
- ²¹ Durbach, "Spectacle," 47.
- ²² Heather McHold, "Even As You and I: Freakshows and Lay Discourse on Spectacular Deformity," in *Victorian Freaks: the Social Context of Freakery in Britain*, ed. Marlene Tromp (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2008), 32.
- ²³ Durbach, "Spectacle," 47. Joseph Merrick, "the elephant man," wrote in his memoirs how crucial it was to his sense of self that he could earn a respectable living as an exhibited body. He had spent previous years in a workhouse where his deformities prevented him from earning much as a laborer.
- ²⁴ Clair, 119.
- ²⁵ McHold, "Even As You and I," 28.
- ²⁶ This figure was calculated using the inflation rate of the Pound Sterling in 1840 and the modern British to US exchange rate of £1/\$1.58.
- ²⁷ Clair, 130.
- ²⁸ "More Dwarfs." *Punch* 10 (1846):93.
- ²⁹ Rebecca Stern, "Our Bear Women, Ourselves: Affiliating with Julia Pastrana," in *Victorian Freaks: the Social Context of Freakery in Britain*, edited by Marlene Tromp (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2008), 201.
- ³⁰ Heather McHold, "Diagnosing Difference: The Scientific, Medical, and Popular Engagement with Monstrosity in Victorian Britain," (PhD diss., Northwestern University, 2002), 58.
- ³¹ O'Connor, 246.
- ³² After her death, Caroline's manager sold her body to the Royal College of Surgeons. Caroline's father attempted to claim her body for burial, but arrived too late to save his daughter's remains from dissection. See Clair 113.
- ³³ Ruth Richardson, *Death, Dissection and the Destitute*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987), 32.
- ³⁴ Richardson, "Death," 36.
- ³⁵ Richardson, "Death," 52. Richardson's exquisitely researched investigation of the commodification of the dead body is an invaluable resource to those wishing to learn more on the subject.
- ³⁶ Alberti, "Morbid Curiosities," 71-2.
- ³⁷ Richardson, "Death," 55.
- ³⁸ Chaplin, 106.
- ³⁹ Rosemarie Garland Thompson, "Introduction: From Wonder to Error—A Genealogy of Freak Discourse in Modernity," in *Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body*, ed. Rosemarie Garland Thompson, (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 5.
- ⁴⁰ Bogdan, 19.
- ⁴¹ Maximo and Bartola, who were first shown in New York, c. 1849, were also exhibited as "the Aztec Children." They were advertised as Lilliputian Gods, venerated by the small population of a walled city that was thought to be the Aztec's last refuge. In reality they were two severely mentally handicapped siblings from Mexico whose mother could not afford to support her invalid children, and sold them to their first manager under the pretense of having them educated in the United States. See Clair 117.
- ⁴² Bogdan, 129.
- ⁴³ Bogdan, 19.
- ⁴⁴ McHold, "Diagnosing Differences," 56.
- ⁴⁵ Bogdan, 98.
- ⁴⁶ Chaplin, 131.
- ⁴⁷ Chaplin, 73.

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- ⁴⁸ “Operation on a Chinese.” *The Lancet*, vol. 16, issue 398 (1831): 1.
- ⁴⁹ “Operation on a Chinese,” 1.
- ⁵⁰ Meagan Kennedy, “‘Poor Hoo Loo’: Sentiment, Stoicism, and the Grotesque in British Imperial Medicine,” in *Victorian Freaks: the Social Context of Freakery in Britain*, ed. Marlene Tromp, (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2008), 86.
- ⁵¹ “Operation on a Chinese,” 2.
- ⁵² Kennedy, 92.
- ⁵³ Allen Fyfe, “Reading Natural History at the British Museum and the *Pictorial Museum*,” in *Science and the Marketplace: Nineteenth-Century Sites and Experiences*, eds. Allen Fyfe and Bernard Lightman (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), 196-197. This was due to the new literacy of the lower and middle classes. However, the education available to this demographic was often very limited. Though a reader may have been able to comprehend the printed word, a lack of basic elementary education in other subjects continued to limit even a literate lower-middle-class Briton.
- ⁵⁴ Fyfe, 196.
- ⁵⁵ Carroll, 280.
- ⁵⁶ Fyfe, 198.
- ⁵⁷ Clift was John Hunter’s apprentice, and served as museum keeper after Hunter’s death.
- ⁵⁸ Chaplin, 227.
- ⁵⁹ Carroll, 281.
- ⁶⁰ Hunterian Museum, “Specimen 223,” in the *Descriptive Catalogue of the Physiological Series in the Hunterian Museum of the Royal College of Surgeons of England: Hunterian Specimens Demonstrating the Products of Generation Together with the Surviving Hunterian Specimens from Other Sections. Part II*, (London: Livingston, 1971), 199.
- ⁶¹ Hunterian, “Physiological Series,” 199.
- ⁶² Hunterian, “Physiological Series,” 200.
- ⁶³ Hunterian, “Physiological Series,” 201.
- ⁶⁴ Hunterian, “Physiological Series,” 200.
- ⁶⁵ Hunterian, “Physiological Series,” 200.
- ⁶⁶ Hunterian, “Physiological Series,” 203.
- ⁶⁷ \$122,102.00 in today’s currency.
- ⁶⁸ Hunterian, “Physiological Series,” 203.
- ⁶⁹ Hunterian, “Physiological Series,” 204.
- ⁷⁰ Chaplin, 233.
- ⁷¹ Chaplin, 226.
- ⁷² This condition is known as hypertrichosis.
- ⁷³ *Account of Miss Pastrana, the Nondescript; and the Double-Bodied Boy* (London: Hancock, 1858), 8.
- ⁷⁴ Stern, 201.
- ⁷⁵ Durbach, “Spectacle”108.
- ⁷⁶ *Nondescript*, 5.
- ⁷⁷ *Nondescript*, 11.
- ⁷⁸ Richardson, “Death,” 64.
- ⁷⁹ Ruth Richardson, “Human Remains,” in *Medicine Man: The Forgotten Museum of Henry Wellcome*, eds. Ken Arnold and Danielle Olson (London: the British Museum Press, 2003), 342.
- ⁸⁰ Alberti, “Museum Affect,” 390.
- ⁸¹ Eccentric biography was a popular genre in Georgian and Victorian England and expressed a “wider commodification of abnormality (Gregory, 82). These focused on individuals of eccentric character, many of whom were physically remarkable, “those whose physical appearance both stimulated curiosity and suggested inner oddity” (84). Occasionally these individuals were former freak performers, other times they were either limbless or very short/tall (84). See James Gregory, “Eccentric Lives: Character, Characters and Curiosities in Britain, c. 1760-1900,” in *Histories of the Normal and the Abnormal: Social and Cultural Histories of Norms and Normativity*, ed. Waltraud Ernst, (London: Routledge, 2006), 73-100.
- ⁸² McHold, “Diagnosing Difference,” 5.
- ⁸³ Bogdan, 108.
- ⁸⁴ Hunterian. “Physiological Series,” 203.
- ⁸⁵ *Nondescript*, 5.

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- ⁸⁶ O'Connor, 171.
- ⁸⁷ Samuel J.M.M. Alberti, "Objects in the Museum," *Isis*, vol. 96, no.4 (2005): 56.
- ⁸⁸ Alberti, "Morbid Curiosities," 96.
- ⁸⁹ Alberti, "Museum Affect," 341.
- ⁹⁰ Alberti, "Owning," 143.
- ⁹¹ Chaplin, 137.
- ⁹² Alberti, "Objects," 564.
- ⁹³ Durbach, "Spectacle," 27.
- ⁹⁴ The deformed have a long history of appearing before royalty, either as permanent members of court, or as traveling entertainment. Victorian freaks, especially, capitalized on the patronage of royalty. General Tom Thumb appeared before Queen Victoria, Prince Albert and other members of the royal family in 1844 before continuing on to visit King Louis Philippe in Paris (Clair, 123). The Sicilian Dwarf Caroline Caramachi was kept a secret in her native Italy save only for the Duchess of Parma (Clair, 112). The three Highland Dwarfs performed their national dances for the Royal couple in 1846, and the Aztec twins appeared before the royals in 1853 following their visit with President Fillmore (Clair, 115-116).
- ⁹⁵ "Advertisement," *The Era*, March 4, 1899.
- ⁹⁶ Hunterian, "Physiological Series," 201.
- ⁹⁷ *Nondescript*, 8.
- ⁹⁸ *Nondescript*, 8.
- ⁹⁹ *Nondescript*, 8.
- ¹⁰⁰ *Nondescript*, 9.
- ¹⁰¹ *Nondescript*, 12.
- ¹⁰² Nadja Durbach, "The Missing Link and the Hairy Belle: Krao and the Victorian Discourse of Evolution, Imperialism and Primitive Sexuality," in *Victorian Freaks: the Social Context of Freakery in Britain*, ed. Marlene Tromp, (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2008), 135.
- ¹⁰³ Bogdan, 129.
- ¹⁰⁴ McHold, "Diagnosing Difference," 46.
- ¹⁰⁵ Chaplin, 114.
- ¹⁰⁶ Chaplin, 34.
- ¹⁰⁷ Chaplin, 35.
- ¹⁰⁸ Richardson, "Death," 48.
- ¹⁰⁹ Richardson, "Death," 49.
- ¹¹⁰ Durbach, "Spectacle," 26.
- ¹¹¹ Hunterian, "Physiological Series," 200.
- ¹¹² Hunterian, "Physiological Series," 201.
- ¹¹³ Hunterian, "Physiological Series," 202.
- ¹¹⁴ Hunterian, "Physiological Series," 205. The caption for Kay's engraving in his *A series of original portraits and caricature etchings by John Kay* (1837) recounts Byrne's wishes to be buried at sea in order to avoid dissection. The caption is reprinted in the catalogue entry.
- ¹¹⁵ *Nondescript*, 6.
- ¹¹⁶ *Nondescript*, 11.
- ¹¹⁷ *Nondescript*, 11.
- ¹¹⁸ *Nondescript*, 10.
- ¹¹⁹ *Nondescript*, 4.
- ¹²⁰ Bogdan, 177.
- ¹²¹ Marlene Tromp, "Empire and the Indian Freak: the 'Miniature Man' from Cawnpore and the 'Marvelous Indian Boy' on tour in England," in *Victorian Freaks: the Social Context of Freakery in Britain*, ed. Marlene Tromp (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2008), 159.
- ¹²² Tromp, "Empire," 158.
- ¹²³ Bogdan, 122.
- ¹²⁴ Sarah Mitchell, "From 'Monstrous' to 'Abnormal': the Case of Conjoined Twins in the Nineteenth Century," in *Histories of the Normal and the Abnormal: Social and Cultural Histories of Norms and Normativity*, ed. Waltraud Ernst, (London: Routledge, 2006), 60.
- ¹²⁵ *Nondescript*, 7.

¹²⁶ See L. Perry Curtis, Jr., *Apes and Angels: The Irishman in Victorian Caricature*, (Washington D.C: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1971).

¹²⁷ Curtis, 43,63.

¹²⁸ Hunterian, "Physiological Series," 202.

¹²⁹ Richardson, "Death," 5.

¹³⁰ Alberti, "Morbid Curiosities," 90.

¹³¹ In the auction advertisement for Sir Richard Jebb's collection (1787) a "complete skeleton" was given higher billing than his "capital Collection of valuable Paintings fine Prints and Drawings [sic]." Chaplin, p.141.

¹³² Alberti, "Morbid Curiosities," 93.

¹³³ Alberti, "Owning," 145.

¹³⁴ The frontispiece for the auction catalogue boasts a collection of 6,000+ preparations amassed over a thirty year career at the expense of £30,000.00. See *A Catalogue of the Anatomical & Zoological Museum of Joshua Brookes, Esq. F.R.S. F.L.S.* (London, 1828), 1.

¹³⁵ See appendix 1 for the breakdown of specimens and their identifying details.

¹³⁶ Brookes (no., lot): (2, 220), (2, 235), (6, 81), (6, 90), (18, 35), (18, 61), (18, 68), (18, 71), and (19, 88).

¹³⁷ Alberti, "Owning," 187.

¹³⁸ Brookes, (1, 50), (18, 62), (28, 26), (28, 31), (28, 32), and (29, 125).

¹³⁹ Brookes, (1, 45), (1, 46), (1, 101), and (2, 262).

¹⁴⁰ Brookes, (2, 146), (2, 255), and (2, 224).

¹⁴¹ Chaplin, 234.

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